

## FAQ for the Self-Help & Urban Self-Help Grant Programs

*Q. Who can apply?*

A. Depends on the type of project.

Conservation Acquisitions:

- Municipal conservation commissions and community preservation commissions.

Park Projects:

- Municipal park departments or park commissions.

*Q. I'm a member of a nonprofit organization. Are we eligible to apply?*

A. Not directly, but your organization could partner with the appropriate town or city agency.

*Q. Does the community also need to meet eligibility requirements?*

A. Yes – each applicant must have a current [open space and recreation plan](#) on file with DCS. Click on [open space plan status](#) for information on your community. In addition, any community that has an unresolved “parkland” conversion issue with EOEA is ineligible to apply.

*Q. How much money is available under each program?*

A. The total amount awarded under each program varies year to year, as does the maximum grant award offered to each community. The maximum grant award for the FY2007 is \$500,000, regardless of the grant program.

*Q. Is every project eligible to receive the maximum grant of \$500,000?*

A. No, each reimbursement is a calculation based on the community's equalized valuation per capita decile ranking. This sliding scale provides for a larger reimbursement percentage for a less affluent community. Click on [reimbursement rate 2007](#) for your community's rate.

*Q. We've already purchased our land, can we still be reimbursed?*

A. No, so be sure not to purchase the property unless you have a signed contract from DCS.

*Q. We've already started our park development project, can we be reimbursed?*

A. No, so be sure not to start your project unless you have a signed contract from DCS.

*Q. Our project involves the donation of land. May we use that as part of the municipal "share" of the total project cost?*

A. Unfortunately, we cannot count the land value towards the project's eligible costs for the Self-Help or Urban Self-Help grant programs. The regulations for both the Self-Help & Urban Self-Help programs state that we reimburse the acquisition cost based on approved appraised value or actual purchase price, whichever is less.

*Q. Will you fund a playground on school property?*

A. No, facilities on school department land are not eligible projects. This is because that land is not legally dedicated to park use. Therefore the playground could easily be eliminated by a school expansion project, and the grant investment would be lost.

*Q. If DCS funds our project, does the state then own the property?*

A. No – the city or town owns the conservation area or parkland. However, the land is legally protected open space.

*Q. What is legally protected open space?*

A. Land owned by private, public and nonprofit owners may be permanently protected open space ("Article 97 land"), provided that they have been dedicated to such uses as conservation or recreational use by deed. Municipal properties may also be protected via the Town Meeting Vote or City Council Order to acquire them. Article 97 refers to Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the State Constitution.

*Q. Is there a grant round this year, and if so, what is the deadline?*

A. The typical grant round is run on an annual cycle. The application deadline is at least 90 days after the initial grant round announcement. Please bookmark our homepage for the latest update on the current ground round cycle at [www.mass.gov/envir/dcs](http://www.mass.gov/envir/dcs).

The FY07 Grant Round for Self-Help and Urban Self-Help programs has been announced, and the deadline for submissions is August 1, 2006. Be sure to download a complete application package, review it carefully, and attend the Workshop.

*Q. How does my town apply?*

A. Visit the Self-Help, Urban Self-Help or Land and Water Conservation Fund portion of our website to obtain the necessary

application forms and documents, and information on our free “How to Apply” workshop.

Q. May property be acquired using the authority of an eminent domain taking?

A. Yes – it’s possible to acquire land this way through either program. If it is done, it is often done as a “friendly taking” to clear title. That’s why it’s important to research title now, rather than discover next spring that clear title is not possible and the project sadly fails.